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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council expresses strong support for use of humanitarian air drops, in full cooperation with United Nations, into isolated areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina; condemns blockade of humanitarian convoys, calling it "serious impediment to negotiated settlement"; meanwhile, United States announces that it will conduct humanitarian air drops over Bosnia.

+ Secretary-General appeals to representatives of Angolan Government and UNITA to agree on cease-fire and resume political dialogue at second round of talks scheduled to begin in Addis Ababa, tomorrow.

+ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in Near East condemns killing of United Nations nurse by Israeli troops.

+ Special Representative of Secretary-General for Cambodia expresses disappointment at performance of donors in disbursing their pledges to the country.

+ World Food Programme says potentially serious winter food crisis in northern Iraq is averted by deliveries of food ahead of schedule; situation remains critical in rest of country.

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The Security Council today expressed its strong support for the use of humanitarian air drops, in full cooperation with the United Nations, in isolated areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina that are in critical need of relief supplies and cannot be reached by ground convoys.

The action came in a statement read out by Council President Ahmed Snoussi (Morocco), in which the Council strongly condemned once again the blocking of humanitarian convoys that, inspite of repeated demands, continued to be impeded by Serb paramilitary units, especially in the eastern parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely in the enclaves of Srebrenica, Cerska, Gorazde and Zepa. It also reiterated its demand that the Bosnian parties grant immediate and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance.

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The statement said the Council deplored the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina at a time when discussions were to resume with a view to reaching a just and durable agreement to end the conflict. The Council also expressed concern over the security of United Nations personnel threatened by measures taken by the Serb paramilitary units to interdict humanitarian convoys.

The deliberate impeding of the delivery of food and humanitarian relief essential for the survival of the civilian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted a violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention, the statement said, and the Council was committed to ensuring that individuals responsible for such acts were brought to justice.

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton announced today that, in coordination with the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United States would conduct humanitarian air drops over Bosnia.

In a statement issued by the United States Mission to the United Nations, President Clinton said the purpose of the air drops was to supplement land convoys, as a temporary measure, designed to address the immediate needs of isolated areas that could not be reached by ground.

President Clinton said that regular overland deliveries were the best means to ensure that the long-term needs of the Bosnian population were met, and he stressed that the priority for air deliveries would be determined without regard to ethnic or religious affiliation.

In a separate development, the Russian Federation has said it would support the establishment of multi-national United Nations forces to assist in the implementation of the peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina after its approval and would consider participating with a Russian contingent in such forces. The proposal was put forward in a statement submitted to the President of the Security Council by the Russian Permanent Representative, Yuriy M. Vorontsov, in a letter dated 24 February.
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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appealed to representatives of the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to agree on the speedy implementation of an effective cease-fire which would enable the resumption of a political dialogue. The second round of talks are scheduled to begin in Addis Ababa, tomorrow.

Calling on leaders of both sides to make every effort and display the necessary spirit of compromise, the Secretary-General said today in a statement that a truce was necessary not only to enable the resumption of a dialogue but also to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered to millions of suffering Angolans.

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The Secretary-General said that a "humanitarian tragedy" of grave proportions was developing there and it could get even worse. Many thousands of people were killed in fighting over the past four months and up to three million Angolans were estimated to be suffering from hunger, drought and disease. The children and the aged, being the most vulnerable groups of society, were the worst affected, he said.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali noted that the support of the international community largely depended on the implementation of a rapid and effective cease-fire and the Addis Ababa talks was a "crucial watershed."

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has condemned the killing of a United Nations nurse by Israeli troops on Tuesday, according to a press release issued by the agency in Vienna yesterday. The 28 year-old nurse, Awad Suradi, was shot in the back of the head by a single bullet as he was providing emergency medical assistance to an injured boy in Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

Pointing out that the incident was part of a pattern of increased use of lethal force by Israel, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Ilter Türkmen, said the agency would lodge a strong protest with the Government of Israel. He added that it was "inadmissible that Israeli troops should open fire on United Nations staff, especially medical personnel treating injured persons."

The agency also stated that there had been more deaths and injuries over the past few months in the Gaza Strip than at any time in nearly three years. Since 1 December 1992, a total of 39 deaths and more than 1,000 injuries were reported in the Gaza Strip. Thirteen of the dead were children under the age of sixteen.

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The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi has expressed disappointment at the performance of donors in disbursing their pledges to the country made in Tokyo last June.

Addressing a donors review meeting in Phnom Penh today, Mr. Akashi said it was hard to avoid the impression that "some donors have slowed the pace of their activity in order to assess the evolution of the political situation in Cambodia". He urged the donors to recognize that "a certain amount of risk has always surrounded the international effort in Cambodia".

Mr. Akashi told the donors that their positive response would "mean much to Cambodia and to the success of the unprecedented international effort to put in place a freely-elected government" that could usher in "a new era of peace and prosperity that the people of Cambodia aspire to so much".

The meeting was aimed at taking stock of progress made so far; to ascertain achievements made; to identify areas where progress had not been

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adequate; and to draw conclusions as to what modification in approach or policy was required.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) announced today in Ankara that a potentially serious food crisis in northern Iraq had been averted as all the 34,200 metric tonnes of food required for the winter relief programme had been delivered well ahead of schedule.

Nevertheless, the Programme warned, there still was need for further humanitarian assistance beyond 31 March and the situation in central and southern Iraq remained critical as the shipping of the amount of food pledged for that region had only started recently.

Following the start of the United Nations winter relief programme in November, the WFP had launched its plans to feed 750,000 people in northern Iraq and 450,000 people in the central and southern regions.

The food supplies for the Kurdish population in northern Iraq were rolled in from neighbouring Turkey by trucks. During the delivery period, the WFP experienced a number of problems, including the blowing up of United Nations relief convoys by bombs which led to a delay and temporary suspension of the food distribution.

The Programme began relief operations in Iraq after the Gulf War in April 1991. Since then, it has delivered about 190,000 tonnes of food valued at about $106 million to vulnerable groups in all of Iraq.

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